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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM IV](#)
SUBJECT: CEI COMMISSIONER PROVIDES INSIGHTS INTO SCANDAL

REF: 10 ABIDJAN 15; 10 ABIDJAN 13

CLASSIFIED BY: Tanya Salseth, Political Officer, DoS; REASON: 1.4(B),
(D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) President Robert Mambe has remained silent while President Gbagbo's supporters have accused him of fraud and called for his resignation (reftels). Deputy CEI Spokesperson Yacouba Bamba told Poloff on January 13 that, although Mambe did conduct further cross-checking of data, he believes the CDs in question were planted by members of the president's camp, who are seeking to delay elections by casting serious doubts on the electoral process. END SUMMARY

12. (C) Deputy CEI Spokesperson Yacouba Bamba (a commissioner appointed by the Forces Nouvelles) confirmed to Poloff that Mambe did order CEI computer technicians to run further data cross-checks after the provisional electoral list was posted nationwide. As a result of these cross-checks, Mambe found 429,000 names among the 1.033 million "unverified" ones that could possibly be added to the final list. These names were saved to CDs. Contrary to the FPI's claims, Bamba said Mambe distributed these CDs to all of the central CEI commissioners (including those appointed by the FPI) sometime in November 2009. There is no evidence that these CDs were used to add names to the list and they did not provoke much interest until January 6. On that day, Bamba said President Gbagbo asked Mambe to extend the period for challenging the provisional electoral list for a third time. Mambe refused. Almost immediately afterwards, the president's camp accused him of fraud. Bamba told Poloff that he believes the CDs that were discovered in local CEI offices were planted by employees who had been paid off by the president's camp.

13. (C) When asked why Mambe had not come forward to defend himself, Bamba said that the CEI president is concerned by how tense the political atmosphere has become in the last week and feels that challenging President Gbagbo's allegations could substantially heighten tensions. He cited a demonstration that had taken place earlier that day in which approximately 150 PDCI youth marched on the state-run television station RTI after it aired incendiary rhetoric of pro-FPI militant youth leader Charles Ble Goude. [Note: the demonstration ended with several injured after police used teargas to disperse the crowd. End Note.]

14. (C) President Mambe also does not want the process to unravel just as the CEI is on the verge of producing the final electoral list. Nor does he want to upset the delicate balance currently held together by the Ouagadougou Political Accord, which Bamba described as "hanging by a thread."

15. (C) COMMENT: Despite the Prime Minister's attempts to calm the situation (reftel), the president's camp seems determined to use this issue to further fan the flames. Desire Tagro, the Minister of Interior and a Gbagbo confidante, issued a press release on Jan 14 stating that the government will take the fraud case to the highest judge in the country. Unfortunately, reports in the local press have painted Mambe as guilty of fraud, without providing any proof of the veracity of the claim. The press's single-minded focus on the scandal and uninformed explanations on how the electoral process works have also meant that the average citizen does not understand that the integrity of the original SAGEM database has not been compromised. While it is unclear how long the judicial investigation into Mambe's actions will take, it is certain to delay the election time table even further. END COMMENT
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